

Draft NSW Litter Prevention Strategy 2022–30

Background

As part of the development of the Draft NSW Litter Prevention Strategy 2022–30 (the **Litter Strategy**), a public consultation was held from 20 September 2022 to 17 October 2022, in tandem with the consultation for the NSW Illegal Dumping Strategy 2022–27. This report summarises the outcomes of the consultation in relation to the Litter Strategy.

The broad terms of the Litter Strategy were set with the release of the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy (**WASM**) and the NSW Plastics Action Plan in 2021, in which litter prevention targets were set and \$38 million in funding announced for litter prevention through to 2027. The public consultation in 2022 wrapped up an extended consultative process following the launch of WASM. It shaped the draft of the new Litter Strategy and included input from critical stakeholders in litter prevention.

The final Litter Strategy is due to be published in December 2022, accompanied by a five-year Implementation Plan that will be reviewed every two years. The publication is timed to coincide with the opening of the WASM Litter Prevention Grants due in December 2022, with funding available through to 2027.

What we did

- Prior to the consultation period, the EPA Litter Prevention Unit conducted a full-day stakeholder workshop in May 2022 with 47 stakeholders from local government, State government, the community sector and industry. This workshop helped shape the current draft.
- We opened the public consultation on the Litter Strategy, in tandem with the Draft Illegal Dumping Strategy, for almost four weeks from 20 September 2022.
- We developed a HiVE page with an invitation to provide feedback on the Draft Strategy, which was mailed out on 20 September. There were 646 confirmed recipients and an opening rate of 45.5 per cent.
- The Draft Strategy was downloaded 205 times.
- We presented two information sessions, on 28 September 2022 and 12 October 2022, attended by 150 people across both sessions. Peaks in visits to the HiVE page coincided with the sessions.
- The Litter Strategy (as well as the Illegal Dumping Strategy) was presented in overview at each session and a total of 31 questions on the Litter Strategy were received and addressed.
- We received 14 detailed written submissions, with strong representation from local government as well as from industry, State Government and the community sector.
- Among the organisations submitting feedback were Local Government NSW, Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (ROC), Southern Sydney ROC, Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation, Sydney Coastal Councils Group, Total Environment Centre and No More Butts Australia.

What we heard back

Comments on the overall draft document – quality and direction

- The comments on the broad content of the document were positive, noting that it represents an ‘evolution’ from the earlier Litter Prevention Strategy, is easy to use and has a ‘good amount of information’.
- Comments showed acceptance of the ‘big picture’ nature of the Litter Strategy, setting out broad approaches and directions, noting that respondents (particularly local government) expect to continue being consulted as the Litter Strategy is implemented.

Comments on the litter prevention targets

- While the litter targets already set out in WASM (30 per cent reduction in plastic litter by 2025 and 60 per cent for all litter by 2030) were a given, the balance of comments expressed a ‘fairly confident’ view that they would be achieved.
- There was strong endorsement for changing the metric for the target from a volume measure (i.e. from litres per 1000 square metres as it had been previously) to an item-count measure (items per 1000 square metres). One comment noted there was no clear explanation of this change in the Litter Strategy.
- There was strong endorsement for the inclusion of a separate butt litter target (50 per cent reduction in butt littering rate by 2030).

Comments on the 7 Approaches to litter prevention

Approach 1: Source control

- There was strong endorsement for the inclusion of single use plastic bans, which was seen as an evolution from the previous Litter Prevention Strategy.
- There were clear expectations for ongoing engagement between the EPA and its partners on implementing source control.
- Many comments focused on the need to establish re-use initiatives as part of the ongoing efforts to support the source control approach.

Approach 2: Diversion to a circular economy

- There was strong endorsement of the inclusion of extended producer responsibility and produce stewardship as part of this approach.
- The inclusion of a focus on vapes as part of this approach was applauded.
- Other comments included strong appreciation for the Return and Earn Program and for its continued enhancement.

Approach 3: Education, awareness and engagement

- There was general appreciation for the broad aims of the *Don't be a Tosser!* media campaign and a clear expectation that stakeholders will be consulted as part of the redevelopment of this approach through to 2025.

Approach 4: Regulation and enforcement

- Several respondents expressed interest in the training program offered for enforcement officers and there is an expectation that this will be promoted to local government.

Approach 5: Infrastructure and clean up

- This section featured the proposal to introduce strategic streams and longer-term funding arrangements for litter grants under WASM. There was strong, clear endorsement of this approach.

Approach 6: Targeted programs to stop litter dispersal

- Strong endorsement was expressed for all three programs proposed under this approach: Operation Clean Sweep, Cigarette Butt Litter Prevention and Streets to Sea.
- There was particular interest in the Streets to Sea program proposal. Respondents from local government clearly expect to be engaged further as the program is developed in more detail under the Implementation Plan.
- There was strong interest in findings from ongoing research being made available to stakeholders, for example, in litter leakage from waste services, or microplastics.
- The omission of specific mention of the work of Australian Microplastic Assessment Project (AUSMAP) was noted.

Approach 7: Monitoring, evaluation and research

Some respondents expressed an interest in the EPA Litter Data Framework and facilitating ongoing access to litter data.

Other comments

- Some local government respondents made suggestions for redirecting Waste Levy funding to offset costs to councils of waste disposal from street rubbish bins and from gross pollutant traps, and to increase recycling.

How we are responding to the feedback

- Overall, the settings for the current draft seem about right – there was nothing in the submissions to cast doubt on the broad directions proposed.
- In response to feedback, some minor changes have been made to the draft of the Litter Strategy. As proposed it will:
 - include wording to emphasise the intention to consult stakeholders in ongoing development of the Implementation Plan (page 7) and the media strategy (page 14)
 - include mention of AUSMAP in a statement that contextualises the engagement of government and the community in the issue of microplastics (page 21).
- A fuller explanation of the metrics used in the litter targets is beneficial but will need a level of detail that will not be appropriate for the Litter Strategy document itself. Instead, the EPA Litter Data Framework will be amended to include a fuller explanation of the metrics, in time for the release of the Litter Strategy.
- Several suggestions were made for initiatives to be included under the Litter Strategy. For example, initiatives to replace single use plastic takeaway items with re-use options (see note above under Approach 1), or potential Streets to Sea stormwater initiatives (Approach 6). These can already find their 'home' under the strategic litter grants program proposed under Approach 5. The release of the

WASM Grants and the publication of the new Litter Strategy will be the opportunity to pick up on these suggestions with potential applicants.

- The EPA will continue to promote the training for enforcement officers (see note under Approach 5).
- Feedback on the use of the Waste Levy is being referred to Regulation, Policy, Initiatives and Advice for consideration and any necessary action.

What we will do next

Release the final version of the NSW Litter Prevention Strategy 2022–30. We will:

- amend the text, as noted above
- attach the five-year Implementation Plan
- amend the EPA Litter Data Framework to include more explanation of the metrics used in the litter targets
- accompany the communications for the release of the Litter Strategy with links to the WASM Litter Grants Program and EPA Litter Data Framework.

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